MUNSEY

OCT 1 1922 OCT 17 1922

VANCE THOMPSON'S
WONDER NOVEL

THE MAN OF THE MIRACLE

ONE NOVELETTE
10 SHORT STORIES

NOVEMBER

PRICE 25 CENTS

The Girl from Hollywood

A MODERN DRAMA OF CITY AND COUNTRY LIFE IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

By Edgar Rice Burroughs

Author of "Tarzan of the Apes," "A Princess of Mars," etc.

XXXIII

CUSTER'S gait showed no indication of the amount that he had drunk. He was a Pennington of Virginia, and he could carry his liquor like a gentleman. Even though he was aflame with the heat of vengeance, his movements were slow and deliberate. At the door he paused, and, turning, retraced his steps to the table where stood the bottle and the glass.

The bottle was empty. He went to the closet and got another. Again he drank, and as he stood there by the table he commenced to plan again.

There must be some reason for the thing he contemplated. There must be some reason so logical that the discovery of his act could in no way reflect upon Shannon Burke, or draw her name into the publicity which must ensue. It required time to think out a feasible plan, and time gave opportunity for additional drinks.

The colonel and Mrs. Pennington were away somewhere down in the valley. Eva and Shannon were the first to return. In passing along the arcade by Custer's open window, Eva saw him lying on his bed. She called to him, but he did not answer. Shannon was at her side.

"What in the world do you suppose is the matter with Custer?" asked Eva.

They saw that he was fully dressed. His hat had fallen forward over his eyes. The two girls entered the room, when they could not arouse him by calling him from the outside. The two bottles and the glass upon the table told their own story. What they could not tell Shannon guessed—he had overheard the conversation between Wilson Crumb and herself.

Eva removed the bottles and the glass to the closet.

"Poor Cus!" she said. "I never saw him like this before. I wonder what could have happened! What had we better do?"

"Pull down the shades by his bed," said Shannon, and this she did herself without waiting for Eva. "No one can see him from the patio now. It will be just as well to leave him alone, I think, Eva. He will probably be all right when he wakes up."

They went out of the room, closing the door after them, and a little later Shannon mounted the Senator and rode away toward home.

Her thoughts were bitter. Wherever Crumb went he brought misery. Whatever he touched he defiled. She wished that he was dead. God, how she wished it! She could have killed him with her own hands for the grief that he had brought to Custer Pennington.

She did not care so much about herself. She was used to suffering because of Wilson Crumb; but that he should bring his foulness into the purity of Ganado was unthinkable. Her brief happiness was over. Now indeed was there nothing more in life for her. She was not easily moved to tears, but that night she was still sobbing when she fell asleep.

When the colonel and Mrs. Pennington arrived at the ranch house, just before dinner, Eva told them that Custer was not feeling well, and that he had lain down to sleep and had asked not to be disturbed. They did not go to his room at all, and at about half past eight they retired for the night.

Eva was very much excited. She had never before experienced the thrill of such

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an adventure as she was about to embark upon. As the time approached, she became more and more perturbed. The realization grew upon her that what she was doing might seem highly objectionable to her family; but as her innocent heart held no suggestion of evil, she considered that her only wrong was the infraction of those unwritten laws of well regulated homes which forbid their daughters going out alone at night. She would tell about it in the morning, and wheedle her father into forgiveness.

Quickly she changed into riding clothes. Leaving her room, she noiselessly passed through the living room and the east wing to the kitchen, and from there to the basement, from which a tunnel led beneath the driveway and opened on the hillside above the upper pool of the water gardens. To get her horse and saddle him required but a few moments, for the moon was full and the night almost like day.

Her heart was beating with excitement as she rode up the cañon toward the big sycamore that stood at the junction of Sycamore Cañon and El Camino Largo, where Crumb had told her the night scenes would be taken. She walked her horse past the bunk house, lest some of the men might hear her; but when she was through the east gate, beyond the old goat corral, she broke into a canter.

As she passed the mouth of Jackknife she glanced up the cañon toward the site of the K. K. S. camp, but she could not see any lights, as the camp was fairly well hidden from the main cañon by trees. As she approached El Camino Largo, she saw that all was darkness. There was no sign of the artificial lights she imagined they would use for shooting night scenes, nor was there anything to indicate the presence of the actors.

She continued on, however, until presently she saw the outlines of a car beneath the big sycamore. A man stepped out and hailed her.

"Is that you, Miss Pennington?" he asked.

"Yes," she said. "Aren't you going to take the pictures to-night?"

She rode up quite close to him. It was Crumb.

"I am just waiting for the others. Won't you dismount?"

As she swung from the saddle, he led her horse to his car and tied him to the spare tire in the rear; then he returned to the girl. As they talked, he adroitly turned the subject of their conversation toward the possibilities for fame and fortune which lay in pictures for a beautiful and talented girl.

Long practice had made Wilson Crumb an adept in his evil arts. Ordinarily he worked very slowly, considering that weeks, or even months, were not ill spent if they led toward the consummation of his desires; but in this instance he realized that he must work quickly. He must take the girl by storm or not at all.

So unsophisticated was Eva, and so innocent, that she did not realize from his conversation what would have been palpable to one more worldly wise; and because she did not repulse him, Crumb thought that she was not averse to his advances. It was not until he seized her and tried to kiss her that she awoke to a realization of her danger, and of the position in which her silly credulity had placed her.

She carried a quirt in her hand, and she was a Pennington. What matter that she was but a slender girl? The honor and the courage of a Pennington were hers.

"How dare you?" she cried, attempting to jerk away.

When he would have persisted, she raised the heavy quirt and struck him across the face.

"My father shall hear of this, and so shall the man I am to marry—Mr. Evans."

"Go slow!" he growled angrily. "Be careful what you tell! Remember that you came up here alone at night to meet a man you have known only a day. How will you square that with your assertions of virtue, eh? And as for Evans—yes, one of your men told me to-day that you and he were going to be married—as for him, the less you drag him into this the better it 'll be for Evans, and you, too!"

She was walking toward her horse. She wheeled suddenly toward him.

"Had I been armed, I would have killed you," she said. "Any Pennington would kill you for what you attempted. My father or my brother will kill you if you are here to-morrow, for I shall tell them what you have done. You had better leave to-night. I am advising you for their sakes —not for yours."

He followed her then, and, when she mounted, he seized her reins.

"Not so damned fast, young lady! I've got something to say about this. You'll

keep your mouth shut, or I'll send Evans to the pen, where he belongs!"

"Get out of my way!" she commanded, and put her spurs to her mount.

The horse leaped forward, but Crumb clung to the reins, checking him. Then she struck Crumb again; but he managed to seize the quirt and hold it.

"Now listen to me," he said. "If you tell what happened here to-night, I'll tell what I know about Evans, and he'll go to the pen as sure as you're a silly little fool!"

"You know nothing about Mr. Evans. You don't even know him."

"Listen—I'll tell you what I know. I know that Evans let your brother, who was innocent, go to the pen for the thing that Evans was guilty of."

The girl shrank back.

"You lie!" she cried.

"No, I don't lie, either. I'm telling you the truth, and I can bring plenty of witnesses to prove what I say. It was young Evans who handled all that stolen booze and sold it to some guy from L. A. It was young Evans who got the money. He was getting rich on it till your brother butted in and crabbed his game, and then it was young Evans who kept still and let an innocent man do time for him. That's the kind of fellow you're going to marry. If you want the whole world to know about it, you just tell your father or your brother anything about me!"

He saw the girl sink down in her saddle, her head and shoulders drooping like some lovely flower in the path of fire, and he knew that he had won. Then he let her go.

It was half past nine o'clock when Colonel Pennington was aroused by some one knocking on the north door of his bedroom —the door that opened upon the north porch.

"Who is it?" he asked.

It was the stableman.

"Miss Eva's horse is out, sir," the man said. "I heard a horse pass the bunk house about half an hour ago. I dressed and come up here to the stables, to see if it was one of ours—somethin' seemed to tell me it was—an' I found her horse out. I thought I'd better tell you about it, sir. You can't tell, sir, with all them pictur' people up the cañon, what might be goin' on. We'll be lucky if we have any horses or tack left if they're here long!"

"Miss Eva's in bed," said the colonel; "but we'll have to look into this at once. Custer's sick to-night, so he can't go along with us; but if you will saddle up my horse, and one for yourself, I'll dress and be right down. It can't be the picture people—they're not horse thieves."

While the stableman returned to saddle the horses, the colonel dressed. So sure was he that Eva was in bed that he did not even stop to look into her room. As he left the house, he was buckling on a gun—a thing that he seldom carried, for even in the peaceful days that have settled upon southern California a horse thief is still a horse thief.

As he was descending the steps to the stable, he saw some one coming up. In the moonlight there was no difficulty in recognizing the figure of his daughter.

"Eva!" he exclaimed. "Where have you been? What are you doing out at this time of night, alone?"

She did not answer, but threw herself into his arms, sobbing.

"What is it? What has happened, child? Tell me!"

Her sobs choked her, and she could not speak. Putting his arm about her, her father led her up the steps and to her room. There he sat down and held her, and tried to comfort her, while he endeavored to extract a coherent statement from her.

Little by little, word by word, she managed at last to tell him.

"You mustn't cry, dear," he said. "You did a foolish thing to go up there alone, but you did nothing wrong. As for what that fellow told you about Guy, I don't believe it."

"But it's the truth," she sobbed. "I know it is the truth now. Little things that I didn't think of before come back to me, and in the light of what that terrible man told me I know that it's true. We always knew that Custer was innocent. Think what a change came over Guy from the moment that Custer was arrested. He has been a different man since. And the money —the money that we were to be married on! I never stopped to try to reason it out. He had thousands of dollars. He told me not to tell anybody how much he had; and that was where it came from. It couldn't have come from anything else. Oh, popsy, it is awful, and I loved him so! To think that he, that Guy Evans, of all men, would have let my brother go to jail for something he did!"

Again her sobs stifled her.

"Crying will do no good," the colonel said. "Go to bed now, and to-morrow we will talk it over. Good night, little girl. Remember, we'll all stick to Guy, no matter what he has done."

He kissed her then and left her, but he did not return to his room. Instead, he went down to the stables and saddled his horse, for the stableman, when Eva came in with the missing animal, had put it in its box and returned to the bunk house.

The colonel rode immediately to the sleeping camp in Jackknife Cañon. His calls went unanswered for a time, but presently a sleepy man stuck his head through the flap of a tent.

"What do you want?" he asked.

"I am looking for Mr. Crumb. Where is he?"

"I don't know. He went away in his car early in the evening, and hasn't come back. What's the matter, anyway? You're the second fellow that's been looking for him. Oh, you're Colonel Pennington, aren't you? I didn't recognize you. Why, some one was here a little while ago looking for him—a young fellow on horseback. I think it must have been your son. Anything I can do for you?"

"Yes," said the colonel. "In case I don't see Mr. Crumb, you can tell him, or whoever is in charge, that you're to break camp in the morning and be off my property by ten o'clock!"

He wheeled his horse and rode down Jackknife Cañon toward Sycamore.

"Well, what the hell!" ejaculated the sleepy man to himself, and withdrew again into his tent.

XXXIV

SHANNON BURKE, after a restless night, rose early in the morning to ride. She always found that the quiet and peace of the hills acted as a tonic on jangling nerves, and dispelled, at least for the moment, any cloud of unhappiness that might be hovering over her.

The first person to see her that morning was the flunky from the K. K. S. camp who was rustling wood for the cook's morning fire. So interested was he in her rather remarkable occupation that he stood watching her from behind a bush until she was out of sight. As long as he saw her, she rode slowly, dragging at her side a leafy bough, which she moved to and fro, as if sweeping the ground. She constantly looked back, as if to note the effect of her work; and once or twice he saw her go over short stretches of the road a second time, brushing vigorously.

It was quite light by that time, as it was almost five o'clock, and the sun was just rising as she dismounted at the Ganado stables and hurried up the steps toward the house. The iron gate at the patio entrance had not yet been raised, so she went around to the north side of the house and knocked on the colonel's bedroom door.

He came from his dressing room to answer her knock, for he was fully dressed and evidently on the point of leaving for his morning ride. The expression of her face denoted that something was wrong, even before she spoke.

"Colonel," she cried, "Wilson Crumb has been killed. I rode early this morning, and as I came into Sycamore over El Camino Largo I saw his body lying under the big tree there."

They were both thinking the same thought, which neither dared voice—where was Custer?

"Did you notify the camp?" he asked.

"No—I came directly here."

"You are sure that it is Crumb, and that he is dead?" he asked.

"I am sure that it is Crumb. He was lying on his back, and though I didn't dismount I am quite positive that he was dead."

Mrs. Pennington had joined them, herself dressed for riding.

"How terrible!" she exclaimed.

"Terrible nothing," exclaimed the colonel. "I'm damned glad he's dead!"

Shannon looked at him in astonishment, but Mrs. Pennington understood, for the colonel had told her all that Eva had told him.

"He was a bad man," said Shannon. "The world will be better off without him."

"You knew him?" asked the colonel.

"I knew him in Hollywood," she replied.

She knew now that they must all know sooner or later, for she could not see how she could be kept out of the investigation and the trial that must follow. In her heart she feared that Custer had killed Crumb. The fact that he had drank so heavily that afternoon indicated not only that he had overheard, but that what he had heard had affected him profoundly — profoundly enough to have suggested the killing of the

man whom he believed to have wronged the woman he loved.

"The first thing to do, I suppose," said the colonel, "is to notify the sheriff."

He left the room and went to the telephone. While he was away Mrs. Pennington and Shannon discussed the tragedy, and the older woman confided to the other the experience that Eva had had with Crumb the previous night.

"The beast!" muttered Shannon. "Death was too good for him!"

Presently the colonel returned to them.

"I think I'll go and see if the children are going to ride with us," he said. "There is no reason why we shouldn't ride as usual."

He went to Eva's door and looked in. Apparently she was still fast asleep. Her hair was down, and her curls lay in soft confusion upon her pillow. Very gently he closed the door again, glad that she could sleep.

When he entered his son's room, he found Custer lying fully clothed upon his bed, his belt about his waist and his gun at his hip. His suspicions were crystallized into belief.

But why had Custer killed Crumb? He couldn't have known of the man's affront to Eva, for she had seen no member of the family but her father, and in him alone had she confided.

He crossed to the bed and shook Custer by the shoulder. The younger man opened his eyes and sat up on the edge of his bed. He looked first at his father and then at himself—at his boots and spurs, and breeches, and the gun about his waist.

"What time is it?" he asked.

"Five o'clock."

"I must have fallen asleep. I wish it was dinner time! I'm hungry."

"Dinner time! It's only a matter of a couple of hours to breakfast. It's five o'clock in the morning."

Custer rose to his feet in surprise.

"I must have loaded on more than I knew," he said with a wry smile.

"What do you mean?" asked his father.

"I had a blue streak yesterday afternoon, and I took a few drinks; and here I have slept all the way through to the next morning!"

"You haven't been out of the room since yesterday afternoon?" asked the colonel.

"No, of course not. I thought it was still yesterday afternoon until you told me that it is the next morning."

The colonel ran his fingers through his hair.

"I am glad," he said.

Custer didn't know why his father was glad.

"Riding?" he asked.

"Yes."

"I'll be with you in a jiffy. I want to wash up a bit."

He met them at the stables a few minutes later. The effect of the liquor had entirely disappeared. He seemed his normal self again, and not at all like a man who had the blood of a new murder on his soul. He was glad to see Shannon, and squeezed her hand as he passed her horse to get his own.

In the few moments since his father had awakened him, he had reviewed the happenings of the previous day, and his loyalty to the girl he loved had determined him that he had nothing to grieve about. Whatever had been between her and Crumb she would explain. Only the fact that Eva had interrupted her had kept him from knowing the whole truth the previous day.

They were mounted, and had started out, when the colonel reined to Custer's side.

"Shannon just made a gruesome find up in Sycamore," he said, and paused.

If he had intended to surprise Custer into any indication of guilty knowledge, he failed.

"Gruesome find!" repeated the younger man. "What was it?"

"Wilson Crumb has been murdered. Shannon found his body."

"The devil!" ejaculated Custer. "Who do you suppose could have done it?"

Then, quite suddenly, his heart came to his mouth, as he realized that there was only one present there who had cause to kill Wilson Crumb. He did not dare to look at Shannon for a long time.

They had gone only a hundred yards when Custer pulled up the Apache and dismounted.

"I thought so," he said, looking at the horse's off forefoot. "He's pulled that shoe again. He must have done it in the corral, for it was on when I put him in last night. You folks go ahead. I'll go back and saddle Baldy."

The stableman was still there, and helped him.

"That was a new shoe," Custer said. "Look about the corral and the box, and see if you can find it. You can tack it back on."

Then he swung to Baldy's back and cantered off after the others.

A deputy sheriff came from the village of Ganado before they returned from their ride, and went up the cañon to take charge of Crumb's body and investigate the scene of the crime.

Eva was still in bed when they were called to breakfast. They insisted upon Shannon's remaining, and the four were passing along the arcade past Eva's room.

"I think I'll go in and waken her," said Mrs. Pennington. "She doesn't like to sleep so late."

The others passed into the living room, and were walking toward the dining room when they were startled by a scream.

"Custer! Custer!" Mrs. Pennington called to her husband.

All three turned and hastened back to Eva's room, where they found Mrs. Pennington half lying across the bed, her body convulsed with sobs. The colonel was the first to reach her, followed by Custer and Shannon. The bedclothes lay half thrown back, where Mrs. Pennington had turned them. The white sheet was stained with blood, and in Eva's hand was clutched a revolver that Custer had given her the previous Christmas.

"My little girl, my little girl!" cried the weeping mother. "Why did you do it?"

The colonel knelt and put his arms about his wife. He could not speak. Custer Pennington stood like a man turned to stone. The shock seemed to have bereft him of the power to understand what had happened. Finally he turned dumbly toward Shannon. The tears were running down her cheeks. Gently she touched his sleeve.

"My poor boy!" she said.

The words broke the spell that had held him. He walked to the opposite side of the bed and bent close to the still, white face of the sister he had worshiped.

"Dear little sister, how could you, when we love you so?" he said.

Gently the colonel drew his wife away, and, kneeling, placed his ear close above Eva's heart. There were no outward indications of life, but presently he lifted his head, an expression of hope relieving that of grim despair which had settled upon his countenance at the first realization of the tragedy.

"She is not dead," he said. "Get Baldwin! Get him at once!" He was addressing Custer. "Then telephone Carruthers, in Los Angeles, to get down here as soon as God will let him."

Custer hurried from the room to carry out his father's instructions.

It was later, while they were waiting for the arrival of the doctor, that the colonel told Custer of Eva's experience with Crumb the previous night.

"She wanted to kill herself because of what he told her about Guy," he said. "There was no other reason."

Then the doctor came, and they all stood in tense expectancy and mingled dread and hope while he made his examination. Carefully and deliberately the old doctor worked, outwardly as calm and unaffected as if he were treating a minor injury to a stranger; yet his heart was as heavy as theirs, for he had brought Eva into the world, and had known and loved her all her brief life.

At last he straightened up, to find their questioning eyes upon him.

"She still lives," he said, but there was no hope in his voice.

"I have sent for Carruthers," said the colonel. "He is on his way now. He told Custer that he'll be here in less than three hours."

"I arranged to have a couple of nurses sent out, too," said Custer.

Dr. Baldwin made no reply.

"There is no hope?" asked the colonel.

"There is always hope while there is life," replied the doctor; "but you must not raise yours too high."

They understood him, and realized that there was very little hope.

"Can you keep her alive until Carruthers arrives?" asked the colonel.

"I need not tell you that I shall do my best," was the reply.

Guy had come, with his mother. He seemed absolutely stunned by the catastrophe that had overwhelmed him. There was a wildness in his demeanor that frightened them all. It was necessary to watch him carefully, for fear that he might attempt to destroy himself when he realized at last that Eva was likely to die.

He insisted that they should tell him all the circumstances that had led up to the pitiful tragedy. For a time they sought to conceal a part of the truth from him; but at last, so great was his insistence, they were compelled to reveal all that they knew.

Of a nervous and excitable temperament,

and endowed by nature with a character of extreme sensitiveness and comparatively little strength, the shock of the knowledge that it was his own acts that had led Eva to self-destruction proved too much for Guy's overwrought nerves and brain. So violent did he become that Colonel Pennington and Custer together could scarce restrain him, and it became necessary to send for two of the ranch employees.

When the deputy sheriff came to question them about the murder of Crumb, it was evident that Guy's mind was so greatly affected that he did not understand what was taking place around him. He had sunk into a morose silence broken at intervals by fits of raving. Later in the day, at Dr. Baldwin's suggestion, he was removed to a sanatorium outside of Los Angeles.

Guy's mental collapse, and the necessity for constantly restraining him, had resulted in taking Custer's mind from his own grief, at least for the moment; but when he was not thus occupied he sat staring straight ahead of him in dumb despair.

It was eleven o'clock when the best surgeon that Los Angeles could furnish arrived, bringing a nurse with him, and Eva was still breathing when he came. Dr. Baldwin was there, and together the three worked for an hour while the Penningtons and Shannon waited almost hopelessly in the living room, Mrs. Evans having accompanied Guy to Los Angeles.

Finally, after what seemed years, the door of the living room opened, and Dr. Carruthers entered. They scanned his face as he entered, but saw nothing there to lighten the burden of their apprehension. The colonel and Custer rose..

"Well?" asked the former, his voice scarcely audible.

"The operation was successful. I found the bullet and removed it."

"She will live, then!" cried Mrs. Pennington, coming quickly toward him.

He took her hands very gently in his.

"My dear madam," he said, "it would be cruel of me to hold out useless hope. She hasn't more than one chance in a hundred. It is a miracle that she was alive when you found her. Only a splendid constitution, resulting from the life that she has led, could possibly account for it."

The mother turned away with a low moan.

"There is nothing more that you can do?" asked the colonel.

"I have done all that I can," replied Carruthers.

"She will not last long?"

"It may be a matter of hours, or only minutes," he replied. "She is in excellent hands, however. No one could do more for her than Dr. Baldwin."

The two nurses whom Custer had arranged for had arrived, and when Dr. Carruthers departed he took his own nurse with him.

It was afternoon when deputies from the sheriff's and coroner's offices arrived from Los Angeles, together with detectives from the district attorney's office. Crumb's body still lay where it had fallen, guarded by a constable from the village of Ganado. It was surrounded by members of his company, villagers, and near-by ranchers, for word of the murder had spread rapidly in the district in that seemingly mysterious way in which news travels in rural communities. Among the crowd was Slick Allen, who had returned to the valley after his release from the county jail.

A partially successful effort had been made to keep the crowd from trampling the ground in the immediate vicinity of the body, but beyond a limited area whatever possible clews the murderer might have left in the shape of footprints had been entirely obliterated long before the officers arrived from Los Angeles.

When the body was finally lifted from its resting place, and placed in the ambulance that had been brought from Los Angeles, one of the detectives picked up a horseshoe that had lain underneath the body. From its appearance it was evident that it had been upon a horse's hoof very recently, and had been torn off by force.

As the detective examined the shoe, several of the crowd pressed forward to look at it. Among them was Allen.

"That's off of young Pennington's horse," he said.

"How do you know that?" inquired the detective.

"I used to work for them—took care of their saddle horses. This young Pennington's horse forges. They had to shoe him special, to keep him from pulling the off fore shoe. I could tell one of his shoes in a million. If they haven't walked all over his tracks, I can tell whether that horse had been up here or not."

He stooped and examined the ground close to where the body had lain.

"There!" he said, pointing. "There's an imprint of one of his hind feet. See how the toe of that shoe is squared off? That was made by the Apache, all right!"

The detective was interested. He studied the hoofprint carefully, and searched for others, but this was the only one he could find.

"Looks like some one had been sweeping this place with a broom," he remarked. "There ain't much of anything shows."

A pimply-faced young man spoke up.

"There was some one sweeping the ground this morning," he said. "About five o'clock this morning I seen a girl dragging the branch of a tree after her, and sweeping along the road below here."

"Did you know her?" asked the detective.

"No—I never seen her before."

"Would you know her if you saw her again?"

"Sure I'd know her! She was a pippin. I'd know her horse, too."

XXXV

EVA was still breathing faintly as the sun dropped behind the western hills. Shannon had not left the house all day. She felt that Custer needed her, that they all needed her, however little she could do to mitigate their grief. There was at least a sense of sharing their burden, and her fine sensibilities told her that this service of love was quite as essential as the more practical help that she would have been glad to offer had it been within her power.

She was standing in the patio with Custer, at sunset, within call of Eva's room, as they had all been during the entire day, when a car drove up along the south drive and stopped at the patio entrance. Three of the four men in it alighted and advanced toward them.

"You are Custer Pennington?" one of them asked.

Pennington nodded.

"And you are Miss Burke—Miss Shannon Burke?"

"I am."

"I am a deputy sheriff. I have a warrant here for your arrest."

"Arrest!" exclaimed Custer. "For what?"

He read the warrant to them. It charged them with the murder of Wilson Crumb.

"I am sorry, Mr. Pennington," said the deputy sheriff; "but I have been given these warrants, and there is nothing for me to do but serve them."

"You have to take us away now? Can't you wait — until — my sister is dying in there. Couldn't it be arranged so that I could stay here under arrest as long as she lives?"

The deputy shook his head.

"It would be all right with me," he said; "but I have no authority to let you stay. I'll telephone in, though, and see what I can do. Where is the telephone?"

Pennington told him.

"You two stay here with my men," said the deputy sheriff, "while I telephone."

He was gone about fifteen minutes. When he returned, he shook his head.

"Nothing doing," he said. "I have to bring you both in right away."

"May I go to her room and see her again before I leave?" asked Custer.

"Yes," said the deputy; but when Custer turned toward his sister's room, the officer accompanied him.

Dr. Baldwin and one of the nurses were in the room. Young Pennington came and stood beside the bed, looking down on the white face and the tumbled curls upon the pillow. He could not perceive the slightest indication of life, yet they told him that Eva still lived. He knelt and kissed her, and then turned away. He tried to say good-by to her, but his voice broke, and he turned and left the room hurriedly.

Colonel and Mrs. Pennington were in the patio, with Shannon and the officers. The colonel and his wife had just learned of this new blow, and both of them were stunned. The colonel seemed to have aged a generation in that single day. He was a tired, hopeless old man. The heart of his boy and that of Shannon Burke went out to him and to the suffering mother from whom their son was to be taken at this moment in their lives when they needed him most. In their compassion for the older Penningtons they almost forgot the seriousness of their own situation.

At their arraignment, next morning, the preliminary hearing was set for the following Friday. Early in the morning Custer had received word from Ganado that Eva still lived, and that Dr. Baldwin now believed they might hold some slight hope for her recovery.

At Ganado, despair and anxiety had told heavily upon the Penningtons. The colonel felt that he should be in Los Angeles,

to assist in the defense of his son; and yet he knew that his place was with his wife, whose need of him was even greater. Nor would his heart permit him to leave the daughter whom he worshiped, so long as even a faint spark of life remained in that beloved frame.

Mrs. Evans returned from Los Angeles the following day. She was almost prostrated by this last of a series of tragedies ordered, as it seemed, by some malignant fate for the wrecking of her happiness. She told them that Guy appeared to be hopelessly insane. He did not know his mother, nor did he give the slightest indication of any recollection of his past life, or of the events that had overthrown his reason.

At ten o'clock on Wednesday night Dr. Baldwin came into the living room, where the colonel and his wife were sitting with Mrs. Evans. For two days none of them had been in bed. They were tired and haggard, but not more so than the old doctor, who had remained constantly on duty from the moment when he was summoned. Never had man worked with more indefatigable zeal than he to wrest a young life from the path of the grim reaper. There were deep lines beneath his eyes, and his face was pale and drawn, as he entered the room and stood before them; but for the first time in many hours there was a smile upon his lips.

" I believe," he said, " that we are going to save her."

The others were too much affected to speak. So long had hope been denied that now they dared not even think of hope.

" She regained consciousness a few moments ago. She looked up at me and smiled, and then she fell asleep. She is breathing quite naturally now. She must not be disturbed, though. I think it would be well if you all retired. Mrs. Pennington, you certainly must get some sleep—and you too, Mrs. Evans, or I cannot be responsible for the results. I have left word with the night nurse to call me immediately, if necessary, and if you will all go to your rooms I will lie on the sofa here in the living room. I feel at last that it will be safe for me to leave her in the hands of the nurse, and a little sleep won't hurt me."

The colonel took his old friend by the hand.

" Baldwin," he said, " it is useless to try to thank you. I couldn't, even if there were the words to do it with."

" You don't have to, Pennington. I think I love her as much as you do. There isn't any one who knows her who doesn't love her, and who wouldn't have done as much as I. Now, get off to bed all of you, and I think we'll find something to be very happy about by morning. If there is any change for the worse, I will let you know immediately."

In the county jail in Los Angeles, Custer Pennington and Shannon Burke, awaiting trial on charges of a capital crime, were filled with increasing happiness as the daily reports from Ganado brought word of Eva's steady improvement, until at last that she was entirely out of danger.

The tedious preliminaries of selecting a jury were finally concluded. As witness after witness was called, Pennington came to realize for the first time what a web of circumstantial evidence the State had fabricated about him. Even from servants whom he knew to be loyal and friendly the most damaging evidence was elicited. His mother's second maid testified that she had seen him fully dressed in his room late in the evening before the murder, when she had come in, as was her custom, with a pitcher of iced water, not knowing that the young man was there. She had seen him lying upon the bed, with his gun in its holster hanging from the belt about his waist. She also testified that the following morning, when she had come in to make up his bed, she had discovered that it had not been slept in.

The stableman testified that the Apache had been out on the night of the murder. He had rubbed the animal off earlier in the evening, when the defendant had come in from riding. At that time the two had examined the horse's shoes, the animal having just been reshod. He said that on the morning after the murder there were saddle sweat marks on the Apache's back, and that the off fore shoe was missing.

One of the K. K. S. employees testified that a young man, whom he partially identified as Custer, had ridden into their camp about nine o'clock on the night of the murder, and had inquired concerning the whereabouts of Crumb. He said that the young man seemed excited, and upon being told that Crumb was away he had ridden off rapidly toward Sycamore Cañon.

Added to all this were the damaging evidence of the detective who had found the

Apache's off fore shoe under Crumb's body, and the positive identification of the shoe by Allen. The one thing that was lacking —a motive for the crime—was supplied by Allen and the Penningtons' house man.

The latter testified that among his other duties was the care of the hot water heater in the basement of the Pennington home. Upon the evening of Saturday, August 5, he had forgotten to shut off the burner, as was his custom. He had returned about nine o'clock, to do so. When he had left the house by the passageway leading from the basement beneath the south drive and opening on the hillside just above the water gardens, he had seen a man standing by the upper pool, with his arms about a woman, whom he was kissing. It was a bright moonlight night, and the house man had recognized the two as Custer Pennington and Miss Burke. Being embarrassed by having thus accidentally come upon them, he had moved away quietly in the opposite direction, among the shadows of the trees, and had returned to the bunk house.

The connecting link between this evidence and the motive for the crime was elicited from Allen in half an hour of direct examination, which constituted the most harrowing ordeal that Shannon Burke had ever endured; for it laid bare before the world, and before the man she loved, the sordid history of her life with Wilson Crumb. It portrayed her as a drug addict and a wanton; but, more terrible still, it established a motive for the murder of Crumb by Custer Pennington.

Owing to the fact that he had lain in a drunken stupor during the night of the crime, that no one had seen him from the time when the maid entered his room to bring his iced water until his father had found him fully clothed upon his bed at five o'clock the following morning, young Pennington was unable to account for his actions, or to state his whereabouts at the time when the murder was committed.

He realized what the effect of the evidence must be upon the minds of the jurors when he himself was unable to assert positively, even to himself, that he had not left his room that night. Nor was he very anxious to refute the charge against him, since in his heart he believed that Shannon Burke had killed Crumb. He did not even take the stand in his own defense.

The evidence against Shannon was less convincing. A motive had been established in Crumb's knowledge of her past life and the malign influence that he had had upon it. The testimony of the camp flunky who had seen her obliterating what evidence the trail might have given in the form of hoofprints constituted practically the only direct evidence that was brought against her. It seemed to Custer that the gravest charge that could justly be brought against her was that of accessory after the fact, provided the jury was convinced of his guilt.

Many witnesses testified, giving evidence concerning apparently irrelevant subjects. It was brought out, however, that Crumb died from the effects of a wound inflicted by a forty-five-caliber pistol, that Custer Pennington possessed such a weapon, and that at the time of his arrest it had been found in its holster, with its cartridge belt, thrown carelessly upon his bed.

When Shannon Burke took the stand, all eyes were riveted upon her. They were attracted not only by her youth and beauty, but also by the morbid interest which the frequenters of court rooms would naturally feel in the disclosure of the life she had led at Hollywood. Even to the most sophisticated it appeared incredible that this refined girl, whose soft, well modulated voice and quiet manner carried a conviction of innate modesty, could be the woman whom Slick Allen's testimony had revealed in such a rôle of vice and degradation.

Allen's eyes were fastened upon her with the same intent and searching expression that had marked his attitude upon the occasion of his last visit to the Vista del Paso bungalow, as if he were trying to recall the identity of some half forgotten face.

Though Shannon gave her evidence in a simple, straightforward manner, it was manifest that she was undergoing an intense nervous strain. The story that she told, coming as it did out of a clear sky, unguessed either by the prosecution or by the defense, proved a veritable bombshell to them both. It came after it had appeared that the last link had been forged in the chain that fixed the guilt upon Custer Pennington. She had asked, then, to be permitted to take the stand and tell her story in her own way.

"I did not see Mr. Crumb," she said, "from the time I left Hollywood on the 30th of July, last year, until the afternoon before he was killed; nor had I communicated with him during that time. What

Mr. Allen told you about my having been a drug addict was true, but he did not tell you that Crumb made me what I was, or that after I came to Ganado to live I overcame the habit. I did not live with Crumb as his wife. He used me to peddle narcotics for him. I was afraid of him, and did not want to go back to him. When I left, I did not even let him know where I was going.

"The afternoon before he was killed I met him accidentally in the patio of Colonel Pennington's home. The Penningtons had no knowledge of my association with Crumb. I knew that they wouldn't have tolerated me, had they known what I had been. Crumb demanded that I should return to him, and threatened to expose me if I refused. I knew that he was going to be up in the cañon that night. I rode up there and shot him. The next morning I went back and attempted to obliterate the tracks of my horse, for I had learned from Custer Pennington that it is sometimes easy to recognize individual peculiarities in the tracks of a shod horse. That is all, except that Mr. Pennington had no knowledge of what I did, and no part in it."

Momentarily her statement seemed to overthrown the State's case against Pennington; but that the district attorney was not convinced of its truth was indicated by his cross-examination of her and other witnesses, and later by the calling of new witnesses. They could not shake her testimony, but on the other hand she was unable to prove that she had ever possessed a forty-five-caliber pistol, or to account for what she had done with it after the crime.

During the course of her cross-examination many apparently unimportant and irrelevant facts were adduced, among them the name of the Middle Western town in which she had been born. This trivial bit of testimony was the only point that seemed to make any impression on Allen. Any one watching him at the moment would have seen a sudden expression of incredulity and consternation overspread his face, the hard lines of which slowly gave place to what might, in another, have suggested a semblance of grief.

For several minutes he sat staring intently at Shannon. Then he crossed to the side of her attorney, and whispered a few words in the lawyer's ear. Receiving an assent to whatever his suggestion might have been, he left the court room.

On the following day the defense introduced a new witness in the person of a Japanese who had been a house servant in the bungalow on the Vista del Paso. His testimony substantiated Shannon Burke's statement that she and Crumb had not lived together as man and wife.

Then Allen was recalled to the stand. He told of the last evening that he had spent at Crumb's bungalow, and of the fact that Miss Burke, who was then known to him as Gaza de Lure, had left the house at the same time he did. He testified that Crumb had asked her why she was going home so early; that she had replied that she wanted to write a letter; that he, Allen, had remarked "I thought you lived here," to which she had replied, "I'm here nearly all day, but I go home nights." The witness added that this conversation took place in Crumb's presence, and that the director did not in any way deny the truth of the girl's assertion.

Why Allen should have suddenly espoused her cause was a mystery to Shannon, only to be accounted for upon the presumption that if he could lessen the value of that part of her testimony which had indicated a possible motive for the crime, he might thereby strengthen the case against Pennington, toward whom he still felt enmity, and whom he had long ago threatened to "get."

The district attorney, in his final argument, drew a convincing picture of the crime from the moment when Custer Pennington saddled his horse at the stables at Ganado. He followed him up the cañon to the camp in Jackknife, where he had inquired concerning Crumb, and then down to Sycamore again, where, at the mouth of Jackknife, the lights of Crumb's car would have been visible up the larger cañon.

He demonstrated clearly that a man familiar with the hills, and searching for some one whom sentiments of jealousy and revenge were prompting him to destroy, would naturally investigate this automobile light that was shining where no automobile should be. That the prisoner had ridden out with the intention of killing Crumb was apparent from the fact that he had carried a pistol in a country where, under ordinary circumstances, there was no necessity for carrying a weapon for self-defense. He vividly portrayed the very instant of the commission of the crime—how Pennington leaned from his saddle and shot Crumb

through the heart; the sudden leap of the murderer's horse as he was startled by the report of the pistol, or possibly by the falling body of the murdered man; and how, in so jumping, he had forged and torn off the shoe that had been found beneath Crumb's body.

"And," he said, "this woman knew that he was going to kill Wilson Crumb. She knew it, and she made no effort to prevent it. On the contrary, as soon as it was light enough, she rode directly to the spot where Crumb's body lay, and, as has been conclusively demonstrated by the unimpeachable testimony of an eyewitness, she deliberately sought to expunge all traces of her lover's guilt."

He derided Shannon's confession, which he termed an eleventh hour effort to save a guilty man from the gallows.

"If she killed Wilson Crumb, what did she kill him with?"

He picked up the bullet that had been extracted from Crumb's body.

"Where is the pistol from which this bullet came? Here it is, gentlemen!"

He picked up the weapon that had been taken from Custer's room.

"Compare this bullet with those others that were taken from the clip in the handle of this automatic. They are identical. This pistol did not belong to Shannon Burke. It was never in her possession. No pistol of this character was ever in her possession. Had she had one, she could have told where she obtained it, and whether it had been sold to her or to another; and the records of the seller would show whether or not she spoke the truth. Failing to tell us where she procured the weapon, she could at least lead us to the spot where she had disposed of it. She can do neither, and the reason why she cannot is because she never owned a forty-five-caliber pistol. She never had one in her possession, and therefore she could not have killed Crumb with one."

When at length the case went to the jury, Custer Pennington's conviction seemed a foregone conclusion, while the fate of Shannon Burke was yet in the laps of the gods. The testimony that Allen and the Japanese servant had given in substantiation of Shannon's own statement that her relations with Wilson Crumb had only been those of an accomplice in the disposal of narcotics, removed from consideration the principal motive that she might have had for killing Crumb.

And so there was no great surprise when, several hours later, the jury returned a verdict in accordance with the public opinion of Los Angeles—where, owing to the fact that murder juries are not isolated, such cases are tried largely by the newspapers and the public. They found Custer Pennington, Jr., guilty of murder in the first degree, and Shannon Burke not guilty.

XXXVI

ON the day when Custer was to be sentenced, Colonel Pennington and Shannon Burke were present in the court room. Mrs. Pennington had remained at home with Eva, who was slowly convalescing. Shannon reached the court room before the colonel. When he arrived, he sat down beside her, and placed his hand on hers.

"Whatever happens," he said, "we shall still believe in him. No matter what the evidence—and I do not deny that the jury brought in a just verdict in accordance with it—I know that he is innocent. He told me yesterday that he was innocent, and my boy would not lie to me. He thought that you killed Crumb, Shannon. He overheard the conversation between you and Crumb in the patio that day, and he knew that you had good reason to kill the man. He knows now, as we all know, that you did not. Probably it must always remain a mystery. He would not tell me that he was innocent until after you had been proven so. He loves you very much, my girl!"

"After all that he heard here in court? After what I have been? I thought none of you would ever want to see me again."

The colonel pressed her hand.

"Whatever happens," he said, "you are going back home with me. You tried to give your life for my son. If this were not enough, the fact that he loves you, and that we love you, is enough."

Two tears crept down Shannon's cheeks —the first visible signs of emotion that she had manifested during all the long weeks of the ordeal that she had been through. Nothing had so deeply affected her as the magnanimity of the proud old Pennington, whose pride and honor, while she had always admired them, she had regarded as an indication of a certain puritanical narrowness that could not forgive the transgression of a woman.

When the judge announced the sentence, and they realized that Custer Pennington

was to pay the death penalty, although it had been almost a foregone conclusion, the shock left them numb and cold.

Neither the condemned man nor his father gave any outward indication of the effect of the blow. They were Penningtons, and the Pennington pride permitted them no show of weakness before the eyes of strangers. Nor yet was there any bravado in their demeanor. The younger Pennington did not look at his father or Shannon as he was led away toward his cell, between two bailiffs.

As Shannon Burke walked from the court room with the colonel, she could think of nothing but the fact that in two months the man she loved was to be hanged. She tried to formulate plans for his release—wild, quixotic plans; but she could not concentrate her mind upon anything but the bewildering thought that in two months they would hang him by the neck until he was dead.

She knew that he was innocent. Who, then, had committed the crime? Who had murdered Wilson Crumb?

Outside the Hall of Justice she was accosted by Allen, whom she attempted to pass without noticing. The colonel turned angrily on the man. He was in the mood to commit murder himself; but Allen forestalled any outbreak on the old man's part by a pacific gesture of his hands and a quick appeal to Shannon.

"Just a moment, please," he said. "I know you think I had a lot to do with Pennington's conviction. I want to help you now. I can't tell you why. I don't believe he was guilty. I changed my mind recently. If I can see you alone, Miss Burke, I can tell you something that might give you a line on the guilty party."

"Under no conceivable circumstances can you see Miss Burke alone," snapped the colonel.

"I'm not going to hurt her," said Allen. "Just let her talk to me here alone on the sidewalk, where no one can overhear."

"Yes," said the girl, who could see no opportunity pass which held the slightest ray of hope for Custer.

The colonel walked away, but turned and kept his eyes on the man when he was out of earshot. Allen spoke hurriedly to the girl for ten or fifteen minutes, and then turned and left her. When she returned to the colonel, the latter did not question her. When she did not offer to confide in him, he knew that she must have good reasons for her reticence, since he realized that her sole interest lay in aiding Custer.

For the next two months the colonel divided his time between Ganado and San Francisco, that he might be near San Quentin, where Custer was held pending the day of execution. Mrs. Pennington, broken in health by the succession of blows that she had sustained, was sorely in need of his companionship and help. Eva was rapidly regaining her strength and some measure of her spirit. She had begun to realize how useless and foolish her attempt at self-destruction had been, and to see that the braver and nobler course would have been to give Guy the benefit of her moral support in his time of need.

The colonel, who had wormed from Custer the full story of his conviction upon the liquor charge, was able to convince her that Guy had not played a dishonorable part, and that of the two he had suffered more than Custer. Her father did not condone or excuse Guy's wrongdoing, but he tried to make her understand that it was no indication of a criminal inclination, but rather the thoughtless act of an undeveloped boy.

During the two months they saw little or nothing of Shannon. She remained in Los Angeles, and when she made the long trip to San Quentin to see Custer, or when they chanced to see her, they could not but note how thin and drawn she was becoming. The roses had left her cheeks, and there were deep lines beneath her eyes, in which there was constantly an expression of haunting fear.

As the day of the execution drew nearer, the gloom that had hovered over Ganado for months settled like a dense pall upon them all. On the day before the execution the colonel left for San Francisco, to say good-by to his son for the last time. Custer had insisted that his mother and Eva must not come, and they had acceded to his wish.

On the afternoon when the colonel arrived at San Quentin, he was permitted to see his son for the last time. The two conversed in low tones, Custer asking questions about his mother and sister, and about the little everyday activities of the ranch. Neither of them referred to the event of the following morning.

"Has Shannon been here to-day?" the colonel asked.

Custer shook his head.

"I haven't seen her this week," he said. "I suppose she dreaded coming. I don't blame her. I should like to have seen her once more, though!"

Presently they stood in silence for several moments.

"You'd better go, dad," said the boy. "Go back to mother and Eva. Don't take it too hard. It isn't so bad, after all. I have led a bully life, and I have never forgotten once that I am a Pennington. I shall not forget it to-morrow."

The father could not speak. They clasped hands once, the older man turned away, and the guards led Custer back to the death cell for the last time.

XXXVII

It was morning when the colonel reached the ranch. He found his wife and Eva sitting in Custer's room. They knew the hour, and they were waiting there to be as near him as they could. They were weeping quietly. In the kitchen across the patio they could hear Hannah sobbing.

They sat there for a long time in silence. Suddenly they heard a door slam in the patio, and the sound of some one running.

"Colonel Pennington! Colonel Pennington!" a voice cried.

The colonel stepped to the door of Custer's room. It was the bookkeeper calling him.

"What is it?" he asked. "Here I am."

"The Governor has granted a stay of execution. There is new evidence. Miss Burke is on her way here now. She has found the man who killed Crumb!"

What more he said the colonel did not hear, for he had turned back into the room, and, collapsing on his son's bed, had broken into tears—he who had gone through those long weeks like a man of iron.

It was nearly noon before Shannon arrived. She had been driven from Los Angeles by an attaché of the district attorney's office. The Penningtons had been standing on the east porch, watching the road with binoculars, so anxious were they for confirmation of their hopes.

She was out of the car before it had stopped and was running toward them. The man who had accompanied her followed, and joined them on the porch. Shannon threw her arms around Mrs. Pennington's neck.

"He is safe!" she cried. "Another has confessed, and has satisfied the district attorney of his guilt."

"Who was it?" they asked.

Shannon turned toward Eva.

"It is going to be another blow to you all," she said; "but wait until I'm through, and you will understand that it could not have been otherwise. It was Guy who killed Wilson Crumb."

"Guy? Why should he have done it?"

"That was it. That was why suspicion was never directed toward him. Only he knew the facts that prompted him to commit the deed. It was Allen who suggested to me the possibility that it might have been Guy. I have spent nearly two months at the sanatorium with this gentleman from the district attorney's office, in an effort to awaken Guy's sleeping intellect to a realization of the past, and of the present necessity for recalling it. He has been improving steadily, but it was only yesterday that memory returned to him. We worked on the theory that if he could be made to realize that Eva lived, the cause of his mental sickness would be removed. We tried everything, and we had almost given up hope when, almost like a miracle, his memory returned, while he was looking at a kodak picture of Eva that I had shown him. The rest was easy, especially after he knew that she had recovered. Instead of the necessity for confession resulting in a further shock, it seemed to inspirit him. His one thought was of Custer, his one hope that we would be in time to save him."

"Why did he kill Crumb?" asked Eva.

"Because Crumb killed Grace. He told me the whole story yesterday."

Very carefully Shannon related all that Guy had told of Crumb's relations with his sister, up to the moment of Grace's death.

"I am glad he killed him!" said Eva. "I would have had no respect for him if he hadn't done it."

"Guy told me that the evening before he killed Crumb he had been looking over a motion picture magazine, and he had seen there a picture of Crumb which tallied with the photograph he had taken from Grace's dressing table—a portrait of the man who, as she told him, was responsible for her trouble. Guy had never been able to learn this man's identity, but the picture in the magazine, with his name below it, was a reproduction of the same photograph. There was no question as to the man's identity. The scarfpin, and a lock of hair fall-

ing in a peculiar way over the forehead, marked the pictures as identical. Though Guy had never seen Crumb, he knew from conversations that he had heard here that it was Wilson Crumb who was directing the picture that was to be taken on Ganado. He immediately got his pistol, saddled his horse, and rode up to the camp in search of Crumb. It was he whom one of the witnesses mistook for Custer. He then did what the district attorney attributed to Custer. He rode to the mouth of Jackknife, and saw the lights of Crumb's car up near El Camino Largo. While he was in Jackknife, Eva must have ridden down Sycamore from her meeting with Crumb, passing Jackknife before Guy rode back into Sycamore. He rode up to where Crumb was attempting to crank his engine. Evidently the starter had failed to work, for Crumb was standing in front of the car, in the glare of the headlights, attempting to crank it. Guy accosted him, charged him with the murder of Grace, and shot him. He then started for home by way of El Camino Largo. Half a mile up the trail he dismounted and hid his pistol and belt in a hollow tree. Then he rode home.

"He told me that while he never for an instant regretted his act, he did not sleep all that night, and was in a highly nervous condition when the shock of Eva's supposed death unbalanced his mind; otherwise he would gladly have assumed the guilt of Crumb's death at the time when Custer and I were accused.

"After we had obtained Guy's confession, Allen gave us further information tending to prove Custer innocent. He said he could not give it before without incriminating himself; and as he had no love for Custer, he did not intend to hang for a crime he had not committed. He knew that he would surely hang if he confessed the part that he had played in formulating the evidence against Custer.

"Crumb had been the means of sending Allen to the county jail, after robbing him of several thousand dollars. The day before Crumb was killed, Allen's sentence expired. The first thing he did was to search for Crumb, with the intention of killing the man. He learned at the studio where Crumb was, and he followed him immediately. He was hanging around the camp out of sight, waiting for Crumb, when he heard the shot that killed him. His investigation led him to Crumb's body. He was instantly overcome by the fear, induced by his guilty conscience, that the crime would be laid at his door. In casting about for some plan by which he might divert suspicion from himself, he discovered an opportunity to turn it against a man whom he hated. The fact that he had been a stableman on Ganado, and was familiar with the customs of the ranch, made it an easy thing for him to go to the stables, saddle the Apache, and ride him up Sycamore to Crumb's body. Here he deliberately pulled the off fore shoe from the horse and hid it under Crumb's body. Then he rode back to the stable, unsaddled the Apache, and made his way to the village.

"The district attorney said that we need have no fear but that Custer will be exonerated and freed. And, Eva"—she turned to the girl with a happy smile—"I have it very confidentially that there is small likelihood that any jury in southern California will convict Guy, if he bases his defense upon a plea of insanity."

"One thing I don't understand, Shannon, is what you were doing brushing the road with a bough from a tree, on the morning after the killing of Crumb, if you weren't trying to obliterate some one's tracks."

"That's just what I was trying to do," said Shannon. "Ever since Custer taught me something about tracking, it has held a certain fascination for me, so that I often try to interpret the tracks I see along the trails in the hills. It was because of this, I suppose, that I immediately recognized the Apache's tracks around the body of Crumb. I immediately jumped to the conclusion that Custer had killed him, and I did what I could to remove this evidence. As it turned out, my efforts did more harm than good, until Allen's explanation cleared up the matter."

"And why," asked the colonel, "did Allen undergo this sudden change of heart?"

Shannon turned toward him, her face slightly flushed, though she looked him straight in the eyes as she spoke.

"It is a hard thing for me to tell you," she said. "Allen is a bad man—a very bad man; yet in the worst of men there is a spark of good. Allen told me this morning, in the district attorney's office, what it was that had kindled to life the spark of good in him. He is my father."

THE END